

# RAND Report Prescribed US Provocations Against Russia and Predicted Russia Might Retaliate in Ukraine

By [Rick Sterling](#)

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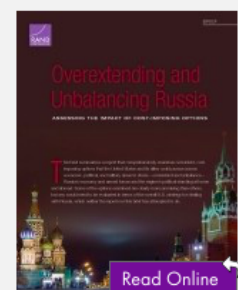
*According to a 2019 Rand report titled [“Overextending and Unbalancing Russia”](#), the US goal is to undermine Russia just as it did the Soviet Union in the cold war. Rather than “trying to stay ahead” or trying to improve the US domestically or in international relations, the emphasis is on efforts and actions to undermine the designated adversary Russia. Rand is a quasi-US governmental think tank that receives three-quarters of its funding from the US military.*

The report lists anti-Russia measures divided into the following areas: economic, geopolitical, ideological/informational, and military. They are assessed according to the perceived risks, benefits and “likelihood of success”.

## **Overextending and Unbalancing Russia** **Assessing the Impact of Cost-Imposing Options**

by James Dobbins, Raphael S. Cohen, Nathan Chandler, Bryan Frederick, Edward Geist, Paul DeLuca, Forrest E. Morgan, Howard J. Shatz, Brent Williams

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Screenshot from [RAND](#)

The report notes that Russia has “deep seated” anxieties about western interference and potential military attack. These anxieties are deemed to be a vulnerability to exploit. There is no mention of the cause of the Russian anxieties: they have have been invaded multiple times and had 27 million deaths in WW2.

## Significance of Ukraine

Ukraine is important to Russia. The two countries share much common heritage and a long common border. One of the most important leaders of the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev, was Ukrainian. During WW2, Ukraine was one of Hitler's invasion routes and there was a small but active number of Ukrainian collaborators with Nazi Germany. The distance from the capital of Ukraine, Kiev, to Moscow is less than 500 miles.

For these same reasons of geography and history, Ukraine is a major component of a US/NATO effort to undermine Russia. Current Under Secretary for Political Affairs, Victoria Nuland, said that over 20 years the [US invested \\$5 billion](#) in the project to turn Ukraine. The culmination was a [violent coup](#) in February 2014. Since 2015, the US has been training ultra nationalist and Neo-Nazi militias. This has been documented in articles such as ["U.S. House admits Nazi role in Ukraine"](#) (Robert Parry, 2015), ["The US is arming and assisting neo-nazis in Ukraine while the House debates prohibition."](#) (Max Blumenthal, 2018), ["Neo Nazis and the far right are on the march in Ukraine"](#) (Lev Golinken in 2019) and ["The CIA may be breeding Nazi terror in Ukraine"](#) (Branko Marcetic Jan. 2022).

## Rand suggested provocations

Prior to 2018, the US only provided "defensive" military weaponry to Ukraine. The Rand report assesses that providing lethal (offensive) military aid to Ukraine will have a high risk but also a high benefit. Accordingly, US lethal weaponry skyrocketed from near zero to [\\$250M](#) in 2019, to [\\$303M](#) in 2020, to [\\$350M](#) in 2021. Total military aid is much higher. A few weeks ago, "The Hill" [reported](#), "The U.S. has contributed more than \$1 billion to help Ukraine's military over the past year".

The Rand report lists many techniques and "measures" to provoke and threaten Russia. Some of the steps include:

- Repositioning bombers within easy striking range of key Russian strategic targets
- Deploying additional tactical nuclear weapons to locations in Europe and Asia
- Increasing US and allied naval force posture and presence in Russia's operating areas (Black Sea)
- Holding NATO war exercises on Russia's borders
- Withdrawing from the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty

These and many other provocations suggested by Rand have, in fact, been implemented. For example, NATO conducted massive war exercises dubbed ["Defender 2021"](#) right up Russia's border. NATO has started ["patrolling"](#) the Black Sea and engaging in [provocative intrusions](#) into Crimean waters. The US has withdrawn from the INF Treaty.

Since 2008, when NATO ["welcomed"](#) the membership aspirations of Ukraine and Georgia, Russia has said this would cross a red line and threaten its security. In recent years NATO has provided advisers, training and ever increasing amounts of military hardware. While Ukraine is not a formal member of NATO, it has increasingly been treated like one. The [full Rand report](#) says "While NATO's requirement for unanimity makes it unlikely that Ukraine could gain membership in the foreseeable future, Washington's pushing this possibility could boost Ukrainian resolve while leading Russia to redouble its efforts to forestall such a

development.”

The alternative, which could have prevented or at least forestalled the current Russian intervention in Ukraine, would have been to declare Ukraine ineligible for NATO. But this would have been contrary to the US intention of deliberately stressing, provoking and threatening Russia.

Ukraine as US client

In November 2021, the US and Ukraine signed a [Charter on Strategic Partnership](#). This agreement confirmed Ukrainian aspirations to join NATO and rejection of the Crimean peoples decision to re-unify with Russia following the 2014 Kiev coup. The agreement signaled a consolidation of Washington’s economic, political and military influence.

December 2021 Russia red lines followed by military action

In December 2021, Russia proposed a [treaty](#) with the US and NATO. The central Russian proposal was a written agreement that Ukraine would not join the NATO military alliance.

When the proposed treaty was rebuffed by Washington, it seems the die was cast. On February 21, Putin delivered a [speech](#) detailing their grievances. On February 24, Putin delivered [another speech](#) announcing the justification and objectives of the military intervention to “demilitarize” and “denazify” Ukraine.

As Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov later [said](#), “This is not about Ukraine. This is the end result of a policy that the West has carried out since the early 1990’s.”

Afghanistan again?

As earlier indicated, the Rand report assesses the costs and benefits of various US actions. It is considered a “benefit” if increased US assistance to Ukraine results in the loss of Russian blood and resources. Speculating on the possibility of Russian troop presence in Ukraine, the report suggests that it could become “quite controversial at home, as it did when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan.” (p 99 of full report)

That historical reference is significant. Beginning in 1979, the US and Saudi Arabia funded and trained sectarian foreign fighters to [invade and destabilize the progressive Afghan government](#). The goals were to overthrow the socialist inclined government and lure the Soviet Union into supporting the destabilized government. It achieved these Machiavellian goals at the cost of millions of Afghan citizens whose country has never been the same.

It appears that Ukrainian citizens are similarly being manipulated to serve US goals.

A “disadvantageous peace settlement”

The Rand report says, “Increasing U.S. military aid would certainly drive up the Russian costs, but doing so could also increase the loss of Ukrainian lives and territory or result in a disadvantageous peace settlement.”

But who would a peace settlement be “disadvantageous” for? Ukrainian lives and territory are currently being lost. Over fourteen thousand Ukrainian lives have been lost in the eastern Donbass region since the 2014 coup.

A peace settlement that guaranteed basic rights for all Ukrainians and state neutrality in the rivalry of big powers, would be advantageous to most Ukrainians. It is only the US foreign policy establishment including the US military media industrial complex and Ukrainian ultra-nationalists who would be “disadvantaged”.

Since Ukraine is a multi-ethnic state, it would seem best to accept that reality and find a compromise national solution which facilitates all Ukrainians. Being a client of a distant foreign power is not in Ukraine’s national best interest.

The Rand report shows how US policy focuses on actions to hurt Russia and manipulates third party countries (Ukraine) toward that task.

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